

THE PLANT LADIES

The plant ladies
come into the office once a week.
They dust the leaves,
check the soil, inspect for bugs,
pinch off the withered leaves.
They hum sweetly to themselves,
are polite, friendly but unobtrusive.

They are a rare breed. I can't
imagine where the company that
sends them finds girls like these.
They are original earth mothers,
caring, nurturing, healing.
There can't be more than
a dozen women like these
left in Southern California.

What has a fern got that
I haven't?

LIKE A MAD HOUSE LIGHT

one by one
all the lights are
going out in our house.

we steal bulbs from
one room to replace
burnt out ones in another.

I am forever
standing on chairs
unscrewing screws
removing glass globes.

empty sockets hang
in the hallway and
laundry room; they
were the first to go,
being least important.

a few days ago
the kitchen light blew
so I borrowed a 75 watt bulb
from the two-bulb fixture
in the dining room,
leaving behind only
a 25 watt. now we
can see what we're cooking
but not what we're eating.

the 25 watt is so dim
it's like a mad house light,
blinder than the darkness
designed to drive us crazy.

the light in the refrigerator
went out as well, providing
a genuinely zen response
to Alan Watts' koan:
"does the refrigerator light
really go off when
you close the door?"

I ransack the broom closet
hoping for unused bulbs
but find only the
empty corrugated paper
boxes, now flat
and useless.

as the available light
diminishes, we begin
to use fewer rooms,
to occupy smaller areas.

soon we will be limited
to the tiny space
in front of the television
and the bedroom,

the only two places
in the home where
darkness is the
preferred condition.

SOMETHING SPANISH

Classical guitar music
comes out of my f.m. radio.
I am sitting in my office at work
without a thing to do.
There are no numbers
lighting up my calculator.
There are no unwritten pages
on my desk. A round,
well used art gum eraser
sits in the middle of the desk
but I have blown all of
the rubber crumbs away.

I am 33 years old. I
have no work to do today.
I also have no career goals.
I'll be gone in six months,
looking for any kind of employment
in another state. I am
not worried.

A five-day vacation begins tomorrow.
I intend to rest, exercise, and
perhaps do a few simple chores